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AUTHOR	Wiggins, E. Foster
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare the level of academic achievement of Bristol Community College students with their level of achievement on graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University, a four-year college to which a large percentage of Bristol Community College students transfer. Specifically, the final grade point averages achieved by Bristol Community College graduates of 1969, 1970, and 1971 were compared with the final grade point averages that these same students achieved on graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University approximately two years later. The results of this study indicate that students who graduated from Bristol Community College in 1970 and 1971 and transferred to Southeastern Massachusetts University continued to achieve at a level similar to that they had achieved at Bristol. The students who graduated from Bristol in 1969 achieved academically at a slightly lower level at Southeastern Massachusetts University that they did at Bristol. (An appendix provides a table of the final grade point averages at both the college and the university.) (Author/DB)

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A COMPARISON OF THE FINAL GRADE POINT AVERAGES ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS AT BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND THE FINAL GRADE POINT AVERAGES ACHIEVED BY THESE SAME STUDENTS AT SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS UNIVERSITY

APPLIED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION MODULE

BY
E. FOSTER WIGGINS, M.S.
BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED
TO NOVA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

NOVA UNIVERSITY

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JC 740 472

ABSTRACT

Bristol Community College is an open-door, comprehensive college which offers both career and transfer programs. The transfer program offers courses offered in the first two years of a four-year college. The majority of students who enter Bristol Community College come from the lower half of their high school graduating class, and their American College Test (ACT) composite scores are well below the level commonly associated with success in baccalaureate oriented programs. Yet, approximately 50 per cent of the students enrolled at Bristol Community College are in transfer level programs. With this information in mind, it can readily be seen that a question relative to the success of these transfer students at senior colleges has arisen.

The purpose of this study was to compare the level of academic achievement of Bristol Community College students upon graduation from Bristol Community College with their level of achievement upon graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University, a four-year college to which a large percentage of Bristol Community College students transfer. Specifically, the final grade point averages achieved by Bristol Community College students who graduated in 1969, 1970, and 1971 from Bristol Community College were compared with the final grade point averages that these same students achieved upon graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University approximately two years later.

The results of this study indicate that students who graduated from Bristol Community College in 1970 and 1971 and transferred to

Southeastern Massachusetts University continued to achieve at a level similar to the level they had achieved at Bristol Community College. The students who graduated from Bristol Community College in 1969 achieved academically at a lightly lower level at Southeastern Massachusetts University than they did at Bristol Community College.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Bristol Community College is an open-door, comprehensive college which offers both career and transfer programs. The transfer program offers courses offered in the first two years of a four-year college. The majority of students who enter Bristol Community College come from the lower half of their high school graduating class, and their American College Test (ACT) composite scores which are the mean of the ACT English, Mathematics, Social Science, and Natural Science scores, average about 16--well below the level commonly associated with success in baccalaureate oriented programs.[1] Yet, approximately 50 per cent of the students enrolled at Bristol Community College are in transfer level programs and the grades of these students tend to conform to the normal curve.

With the above information in mind, it can readily be seen that a question relative to the success of these transfer students at senior colleges has arisen. Since a large percentage of transfer students at Bristol Community College transfer to Southeastern Massachusetts University, a State University which serves the same geographical area as Bristol Community College, it was extremely important to determine if students who achieve at a certain level

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1. Joseph Motta, A Comparison of Bristol Community College American College Test Scores and American College Test National Norms, Unpublished Report, Bristol Community College, 1970.

at Bristol Community College continue to achieve at this level at Southeastern Massachusetts University. This study has taken a step toward finding the answer to this question.

The Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to compare the level of academic achievement of Bristol Community College students upon graduation from Bristol Community College with their level of achievement upon graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University, a four-year college. Specifically, the final grade point averages achieved by Bristol Community College students who graduated in 1969, 1970, and 1971 from Bristol Community College were compared with the final grade point averages that these same students achieved upon graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University approximately two years later. The question, therefore, was: Does a Bristol Community College student who transfers to Southeastern Massachusetts University continue to achieve academically at a similar level?

The Statement of Hypotheses

The following null and alternate hypotheses were developed to test the compiled data:

Null Hypothesis. There is no significant difference between the final grade point averages achieved by students at Bristol Community College and their final grade point averages at Southeastern Massachusetts University.

Alternate Hypothesis. There is a significant difference between the final grade point averages achieved by students

at Bristol Community College and their final grade point averages at Southeastern Massachusetts University.

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

Throughout the years, many studies have been made of the academic achievement of junior and community college transfer students in four-year colleges and universities. Senior institutions make such studies to assist in evaluating their transfer policies and standards, while community colleges make them to appraise their strengths and weaknesses in performing the transfer functions. One of the criterion used by most of the colleges and also used by this researcher is the academic performance of the community college transfer student in the four-year college when compared with his previous performance in the community college. Also, in many studies, college transfer students' academic achievement is compared with the academic achievement of a "native student," i.e., a student who started at the four-year college as a freshman.

Past Studies

One of the very early studies of the achievement of junior college graduates and "native students" in senior institutions was published by Mitchell and Eells at Stanford University in 1928.[2] The records of junior college graduates who transferred to the Upper Division from 1923 to 1927 were compared with a like-

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2. J. P. Mitchell and W. C. Eells, The University Records of Students from Junior Colleges, Faculty Bulletin, No. 13, Stanford University, June 30, 1928.

sized sampling of native students. The transfer student exceeded the native student in academic achievement for each quarter in the Upper Division except the first. The differences were statistically significant.

A study by McIntosh shows findings which contrast to the previous study.[3] McIntosh compared 1,054 native students with 693 junior college transfers who entered the Upper Division from 1933 to 1937. Her two groups were closely comparable on aptitude test scores. The native students exceeded in academic achievement the transfer students in each of the Upper Division quarters, although the gaps were increasingly narrower.

In a study conducted by French, the following conclusions concerning the academic success of junior college transfers at the University of Colorado from November 1945 through the winter term 1949 were rade:[4]

1. Junior college transfers suffered a considerable drop in grade averages after transfer to the University. Averages attained tended to rise during the second and third quarters of residence.

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3. Florine M. McIntosh, A Comparative Study of Academic Records Made of Junior College Transfers, Native Students, and Transfers from Other Four Year Schools, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Stanford University, October, 1944.

4. W. L. French, Academic Success of Junior College Transfer at the University of Colorado, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of Personnel Service, University of Colorado, 1949.

2. Junior college transfers attained averages below the composite university all-school averages for the period.

At the University of California, annual studies are made by the Office of Relations with Schools.[5] Two groups of transfers are noted. The first is the group whose high school records indicate that they are eligible for admission to the university at the time of high school graduation but who, for one reason or another, chose to go to a junior college for two years. The performance of this group in the university is comparable to that of the native students. Except for a slightly lower achievement that the native students had in the first semester of the junior year (a grade point ratio of 1.44 for the transfers to a 1.60 for the native students), the performance in the next three semesters is almost identical (1.60 to 1.63; 1.67 to 1.67; and 1.76 to 1.73).

The second group of transfers, which is somewhat larger than the first, was ineligible for admission to the university at the time of entrance into junior college. This group has qualified for transfer to the university on the basis of the junior college record. It has been "salvaged," so to speak, by the junior college for further advanced study. Its performance is less strong in the junior college and also in the university than the other groups. But the important thing is that the record is satisfactory, rising from 1.1 in the first term after transfer to 1.5 in the fourth.

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5. Grace V. Bird, Preparation for Advanced Study, the Fifty-fifth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1956, p. 77.

It illustrates how successfully the junior college is reopening the doors of higher education to able students whose earlier records did not reveal their true promise.

1. Junior college transfers make records approximately the same as those made by transfers from four-year colleges and by native students, sometimes excelling slightly and sometimes being slightly excelled by the other groups. They usually show a drop in their grade average in the first term after transfer but then recover that loss.
2. Junior college transfers retain the relative scholastic standing after transfer that they held before transfer. Those who originally have high scholastic standing tend to retain such relative standing. Likewise, those with relative low standing tend to remain in the lower groups.

Recent Studies

Snyder conducted a study of 174 Harrisburg Area Community College students who transferred to 56 colleges in 1966.[6] Three-fourths of these students transferred to colleges in Pennsylvania while one-quarter transferred out of state. Also, one-third of the students transferred to Pennsylvania state colleges. From an achievement level of 2.73 at Harrisburg Area Community College,

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6. Fred A. Snyder and Clyde E. Blocker, 1966 Transfer Student Performance, Research Report No. 4, Harrisburg Area Community College, Pennsylvania, 1970.

the students earned a 2.31 grade point average during the first semester in a senior institution. But, their cumulative level of achievement rose to 2.56 by the end of 1969. Thus, a drop of .42 points during the first semester was subsequently reduced to .24 grade points.

A national study of the transfer student was conducted by the Center for the Study of Higher Education, University of California, under the direction of Dr. Dorothy M. Knoell and Dr. Leland L. Medsker.[7] This study involved 4,026 students from 345 two-year institutions who transferred to 43 senior colleges and universities. These colleges and universities included major state universities, teachers colleges, other state universities, private universities, and technical institutions.

The results of the study showed that the average semester grades of the transfer student increased from 2.27 (C+) for the first semester after transfer to 2.42 for the second, 2.54 for the third, and 2.68 for the fourth--a total gain of .40. Also, these transfer students while at junior college earned an average cumulative grade point average of 2.63, as compared to an average cumulative grade point average of 2.36 at the four-year college.

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7. Dorothy M. Knoell and Leland L. Medsker, From Junior to Senior College--A National Study of the Transfer Student, American Council on Education, Washington, D. C., 1965.

Nickens made a study of 926 Baccalaureate degree candidates at Florida State University.[8] Transfer students numbered 445, while 481 were natives. The alleged characteristic drop in grade point average (GPA) of transfer students and the subsequent use in GPA was investigated in this study. No statistically significant difference was found in first term junior year GPA between junior college transfers and native Florida State University students. Also, the subsequent rise in GPA's of junior college transfer students when observed over a two-year period and when students who dropped out were excluded from both groups.

Finally, a survey conducted by Roueche of 24 studies received at the ERIC Clearinghouse dealing with success achieved by the transfer student leads to the following conclusions:[9] (1) Students typically experience a lower grade point average during the first semester following transfer. (2) In most cases, recovery of marks during subsequent semesters can be noted. (3) Grade point averages improve with each successive semester at the senior institution. This survey also determined that transfer students' marks are lower than the average grades made by students who entered senior

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8. John M. Nickens, Transfer Shock or Transfer Ecstasy? Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Illinois, April 6, 1972.

9. John E. Roueche, Follow-Ups of the Junior College Transfer Student, California University, Los Angeles, ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior College Information, February, 1967.

institutions as freshmen, that the transfer student is less likely than the native to graduate, and that the transfer student who does graduate takes longer to reach the Baccalaureate than does the comparable native student.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

Procedures for Collecting the Data

A list of students who had considered transferring from Bristol Community College to Southeastern Massachusetts University in 1969, 1970, and 1971 was obtained from the Bristol Community College Transfer Counselor. (Bristol Community College does not have an exact list of where Bristol Community College graduates have transferred.) This list was sent to Southeastern Massachusetts University Registrar who corrected the list to accurately reflect the students who had transferred to Southeastern Massachusetts University. The Registrar also supplied the final grade point averages of the students on this list who had subsequently graduated from Southeastern Massachusetts University. The names of the students who had transferred to Southeastern Massachusetts University but had either dropped out or had not yet earned their degree were deleted from the list. This refined list was then sent back to Bristol Community College where the students' final grade point averages upon graduating from Bristol Community College were added. A list of the students who graduated from Bristol Community College in 1969, 1970, and 1971 and have graduated from Southeastern Massachusetts University along with their Bristol Community College final grade point averages and their Southeastern Massachusetts University final grade point averages is found in Appendix A.

Note that to ensure confidentiality, a number was assigned to each student.

Procedures for Treating the Data

Since the data in this study satisfies the following three conditions, a parametric test was used to test the significance of a difference in the means of the Bristol Community College final grade point average of students graduating in 1969, 1970, and 1971 and the Southeastern Massachusetts University final grade point average.

1. The curve of the distribution of data in each group closely resembles the normal curve.
2. There is homogeneity of variance between the groups included in this study.
3. The dependent variable, the Southeastern Massachusetts University final grade point average, can be described by data expressed in terms of an interval scale.

The parametric test selected was a two-tailed t-test for non-independent groups taken from Hardyck and Petrinovich.[10] The level of significance at which the data in this study was tested is .05. Following is the t-test used.

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10. Curtis D. Hardyck and Lewis F. Petrinovich, Introduction to Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences, W. B. Saunders Company, Publisher, 1969, p. 123.

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$$t = \frac{\overline{D}}{S_{\overline{D}}},$$

where $S_{\overline{D}} = S_d/\sqrt{N}$ and $S_d = \sqrt{\sum d^2/N - 1.}$

Limitations of the Study

1. This study only applies to Bristol Community College students who transferred to Southeastern Massachusetts University.
2. This study is limited to the Bristol Community College students who graduated from Bristol Community College in 1969, 1970, and 1971.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made.

1. The final grade point averages recorded on the students' transcripts in the registrars' offices at Bristol Community College and Southeastern Massachusetts University were correct.
2. Although Bristol Community College students who transferred to Southeastern Massachusetts University and

withdrew before graduating are not included in this study, it is assumed that the results would not be altered appreciably.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been used in this study:

Southeastern Massachusetts University: This is a neighboring university which is a part of the Massachusetts State University System.

Final Grade Point Average: The final grade point average is determined by adding the number of grade points for all courses and dividing by the number of credits attempted. Grade points are established on the following basis: A, 4 per credit; B, 3 per credit; C, 2 per credit; D, 1 per credit; F, 0 per credit.

College Community: The college community is composed of the faculty, administration, staff, and students of either Bristol Community College or Southeastern Massachusetts University.

Transfer Student: A student who has attended Bristol Community College for at least two years and has transferred to a four-year institution.

Academic Achievement: A student's academic achievement is determined by the student's grade point average.

Native Student: A student who enrolled at a four-year college as a freshman.

American College Test (ACT): Consists of four sub-tests in the following subjects: English, Mathematics, Social Science,

and Natural Science. The highest score a student can achieve is 35.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Table 1 on page 18 indicates both the means of the final grade point averages of Bristol Community College students upon graduation from Bristol Community College in 1969, 1970, and 1971, and the means of the final grade point averages of these same students upon graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University. Also shown in this table is the results of the t-tests applied to each of the groups of students and the number of students in each group.

The t-test applied to the 1969 data produced a calculated t-value of 4. This exceeds the critical t-value and indicates that the alternate-hypothesis is accepted. (The null hypothesis is not accepted.) Thus, there is a significant difference between the final grade point average of Bristol Community College students upon graduation from Bristol Community College in 1969 and their final grade point average upon graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University. The mean of the final grade point averages decreased from 2.89 upon graduation from Bristol Community College to 2.68 upon graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University.

The t-test applied separately to the group of students which graduated from Bristol Community College in 1970 and to the group of students which graduated from Bristol Community College in 1971 produced a value of t of .4 for 1970 and a value of t of .33 for 1971. These values of t are less than the critical t values and indicates

that in each case the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference between the final grade point averages of Bristol Community College students upon graduation from Bristol Community College in 1970 and 1971 and their final grade point averages upon graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University two to three years later.

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Table 1

Means of Bristol Community College Final Grade Point Averages and Southeastern Massachusetts University Final Grade Point Averages and the Results of t-Tests of the Differences in the Means of Bristol Community College Students' Final Grade Point Averages and Their Southeastern Massachusetts University Final Grade Point Averages

Year	Number of Students	Means		Results of t-Test	
		Bristol Community College Final Grade Point Average	Southeastern Mass. University Final Grade Point Average	t-Value	Critical t-Value
1969	49	2.89	2.68	4	2.01
1970	55	2.75	2.73	.4	2.00
1971	71	2.89	2.88	.33	2.00

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

The academic level of achievement of the Bristol Community College students who graduated from Bristol Community College in 1970 and 1971 was the same at Southeastern Massachusetts University as it was at Bristol Community College. The students who graduated in 1969 from Bristol Community College had a lower level of academic achievement at Southeastern Massachusetts University than they did at Bristol Community College. Since the data obtained from the students who graduated in 1970 and 1971 is the most recent, it is concluded that students at Bristol Community College upon transferring to Southeastern Massachusetts University continue to achieve at a similar academic level. This would indicate that Bristol Community College is now adequately preparing students to succeed at Southeastern Massachusetts University and is bridging the gap between the local high schools and Southeastern Massachusetts University. Bristol Community College students transferring to Southeastern Massachusetts University can now be confident that they will succeed academically at a level similar to the level they attained at Bristol Community College.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

The President of Bristol Community College should disseminate the results of this study to both the college community at Bristol Community College and the college community at Southeastern Massachusetts University. Also recommended are further studies of the academic achievement of Bristol Community College transfer students.

Further Studies

The following studies should be initiated.

1. A comparison should be made of final grade point averages of students who graduated from Bristol Community College in 1972 and 1973 and have transferred to Southeastern Massachusetts University with their final grade point averages upon graduation from Southeastern Massachusetts University. This type of study should be continued each succeeding year.
2. A study should be made of the students' grade point averages after the end of one semester at Southeastern Massachusetts University.
3. A comparison should be made of the final grade point averages of students who started as freshmen at Southeastern Massachusetts University and those who transferred to Southeastern Massachusetts University from Bristol Community College.
4. The academic achievement of students who transferred to other colleges (Bridgewater State College and University of Massachusetts at Amherst) should be studied.

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APPENDIX

1971

Final Grade Point Averages

Student Number	Bristol Community College	Southeastern Massachusetts University
1	2.97	3.30
2	2.81	2.08
3	2.89	2.52
4	2.62	3.06
5	3.00	2.86
6	3.29	3.20
7	2.46	2.57
8	2.93	3.04
9	3.49	3.22
10	3.82	3.89
11	2.91	3.06
12	2.90	2.82
13	2.87	2.33
14	3.42	3.69
15	2.63	2.65
16	3.14	2.86
17	3.44	2.85
18	2.44	3.23
19	3.42	2.58
20	2.80	2.80
21	3.40	2.83
22	2.72	2.30

1971 (continued)

Final Grade Point Averages

Student Number	Bristol Community College	Southeastern Massachusetts University
23	3.44	3.39
24	2.89	3.05
25	3.30	3.40
26	1.98	2.12
27	3.25	2.35
28	3.42	3.52
29	2.77	2.81
30	3.04	2.14
31	2.93	1.86
32	2.89	2.63
33	2.51	2.48
34	3.83	3.75
35	2.41	2.03
36	3.79	3.79
37	2.32	2.65
38	2.32	2.94
39	2.77	3.00
40	2.00	2.88
41	2.58	2.84
42	2.58	2.70
43	2.63	3.03
44	2.82	2.21

1971 (continued)

Final Grade Point Averages

Student Number	Bristol Community College	Southeastern Massachusetts University
45	2.47	2.59
46	2.53	2.85
47	3.24	3.86
48	3.23	2.97
49	3.50	2.58
50	2.61	2.70
51	2.60	2.40
52	2.45	3.05
53	2.73	2.91
54	2.64	2.73
55	2.44	2.88
56	3.37	3.11
57	1.60	3.10
58	2.40	2.00
59	2.41	2.73
60	3.67	3.70
61	2.34	2.65
62	3.66	3.45
63	2.69	3.30
64	3.71	3.33
65	3.31	3.40
66	3.19	2.34

1971 (continued)

Final Grade Point Averages

Student Number	Bristol Community College	Southeastern Massachusetts University
67	2.74	2.76
68	3.07	3.38
69	2.44	2.25
70	2.24	2.85
71	2.89	3.32

1970

Final Grade Point Averages

Student Number	Bristol Community College	Southeastern Massachusetts University
1	2.64	2.17
2	2.32	2.68
3	2.43	2.48
4	2.79	2.86
5	3.31	3.05
6	3.11	2.38
7	3.11	3.20
8	2.36	2.18
9	2.49	2.74
10	3.19	3.30
11	2.89	2.57
12	2.80	2.95
13	2.73	2.45
14	2.37	2.70
15	2.23	1.80
16	3.96	3.65
17	2.40	2.48
18	2.47	2.41
19	3.29	3.50
20	2.75	3.05
21	2.60	3.21

1970 (continued)

Final Grade Point Averages

Student Number	Bristol Community College	Southeastern Massachusetts University
22	3.03	2.84
23	2.35	3.04
24	2.39	2.85
25	3.32	3.35
26	2.67	2.59
27	2.68	2.71
28	2.49	2.45
29	2.63	3.03
30	2.89	2.62
31	3.36	3.38
32	2.40	2.07
33	2.93	3.40
34	2.39	1.89
35	2.48	2.71
36	2.72	2.08
37	2.38	2.53
38	2.56	3.29
39	2.55	2.76
40	2.66	2.87
41	2.45	2.48
42	2.60	2.95

1970 (continued)

Final Grade Point Averages

Student Number	Bristol Community College	Southeastern Massachusetts University
43	3.14	2.21
44	2.72	2.24
45	3.20	2.59
46	3.37	2.90
47	2.36	2.10
48	2.59	2.16
49	2.39	2.85
50	3.18	3.45
51	2.69	2.38
52	3.79	3.70
53	2.79	3.19
54	2.33	2.13
55	2.47	2.67

1969

Final Grade Point Averages

Student Number	Bristol Community College	Southeastern Massachusetts University
1	3.62	3.30
2	2.82	1.93
3	3.31	2.89
4	3.60	3.13
5	3.68	3.29
6	3.11	2.12
7	3.19	3.30
8	3.42	3.35
9	2.95	3.00
10	2.82	2.65
11	2.44	2.68
12	2.89	3.00
13	3.22	2.44
14	2.48	2.87
15	2.93	2.66
16	2.38	2.03
17	2.53	2.74
18	3.75	3.50
19	2.80	2.23

1969 (continued)

Final Grade Point Averages

Student Number	Bristol Community College	Southeastern Massachusetts University
20	2.78	2.50
21	3.14	2.43
22	2.86	2.94
23	2.79	2.12
24	3.40	2.66
25	3.24	3.37
26	2.98	3.00
27	3.05	2.97
28	2.80	2.72
29	2.73	3.15
30	2.73	2.05
31	2.34	2.33
32	2.56	3.30
33	2.02	2.47
34	2.31	2.61
35	2.58	3.00
36	3.03	2.56
37	2.41	1.90
38	2.60	3.50
39	2.80	2.07
40	2.41	2.55
41	3.00	2.31

1969 (continued)

Final Grade Point Averages

Student Number	Bristol Community College	Southeastern Massachusetts University
42	3.14	2.21
43	3.13	3.36
44	2.48	2.03
45	2.75	1.90
46	3.00	1.92
47	2.60	2.76
48	2.88	2.72
49	2.97	2.90

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